City to Release costs of Tree for Every Citizen Scheme

A petition to examine issues surrounding the scheme and Aberdeen’s Tullos Hill in particular gained sufficient public support for the city’s Petitions Committee to address the issues. The committee met the petitioners on 21 April. Text of their petition can be found here <http://committees.aberdeencity.gov.uk/mgEPetitionDisplay.aspx?Id=13> .

In May of 2011, campaigners wanted the deer spared and for Tullos Hill to be left as a meadow and the roe deer to be allowed to remain. Campaigners argued that the flowers and the gorse were important habitat and should not have been removed.

The hill is a former industrial and domestic rubbish dumping ground with serious soil pollution issues. When the public found out there would be a deer cull, thousands signed petitions and several community councils objected as well. STV reported that 80% of the city opposed the scheme[[1]](#footnote-1). The convener of the Housing & Environment Committee, Liberal Democrat Aileen Malone, demanded that the public come up with £225,000 for fencing – or the deer would be shot[[2]](#footnote-2). Animal welfare charities and organisations were alarmed at this unprecedented demand, and people were urged not to give into the demand. Free of charge services were offered to show the city how to grow the trees using non-lethal methods – these were dismissed out of hand. A spokesperson for the Scottish SPCA referred to the culling of the deer for the tree scheme as ‘abhorrent and absurd[[3]](#footnote-3).’

The public were initially told the tree planting would be at no cost to them. However, a Freedom of Information request revealed that an expert C J Piper, was paid £72,212 for services to the tree-planting scheme[[4]](#footnote-4). Other expenses include fencing, the cost of having the deer shot, and a previous failed planting on the same hill which saw the taxpayers returning £43,800 to Scottish Natural Heritage[[5]](#footnote-5). The campaigners want to know what all of the expenses are both historic and ongoing.

John Robins of Animal Concern said:-

“Aberdeen City Council have all but wiped out a perfectly healthy herd of deer which had existed for generations on a piece of rough land which has never been suitable for anything else. Tullos Hill evolved into its own natural habitat and should have been valued and protected for what it was and not destroyed to fit in with the grandiose plans of petty politicians. It is extremely unlikely that any new woodland will survive on Tullos Hill[[6]](#footnote-6).”

Suzanne Kelly, who has written several articles for Aberdeen Voice and a report, continued:-

“There may be very few deer left in the entire city according to a recent SNH count. We want to know how much tax money has gone on this scheme, we want no further culling, and we want the city to seek assurances from the SNH that we won’t see another £43,800 bill coming our way: the trees are covered by weeds in many places, no matter how many awards have been dished out.”

“I don’t agree with killing the deer. I think it’s disgusting” Torry resident Earl Solomon said[[7]](#footnote-7).

The city council will consider its deer control issues again in October. It voluntarily has culled the 46 deer to grow trees, saying they are sticking to Scottish Natural Heritage guidelines. These guidelines are just that – guidance and not legally binding. Other local authorities such as Glasgow decided not to kill their deer.

More information on the costs of the Tree for Every Citizen scheme will be released shortly. It is important to see how much this scheme has actually cost Aberdeen’s taxpayers.

1. STV report <http://news.stv.tv/north/17411-over-80-against-tullos-hill-cull/> 11 May 2011 (attached) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. 9 May 2011 STV report <http://news.stv.tv/north/17223-campaigners-hand-over-petition-opposing-deer-cull-to-council/> (attached) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Scottish SPCA publication 2 March 2011 http://www.scottishspca.org/news/560\_charity-calls-for-cull-to-be-stopped (attached) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. EIR-13-0110 - A Tree for Every Citizen response from Aberdeen City to S Kelly of Thu, 14 Feb 2013 9:39 (attached) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. letter from Forestry Commission Scotland to Aberdeen City Council 2March 2011 (attached) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. John Robins of Animal Concern in email to S Kelly of Fri, 3 Apr 2015 2:05 (attached) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Earl Solomon of Baxter Street in conversation of 15 August; telephone number is 07758 329350 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)